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induce them to give their services to meet the needs of their fellow-creatures.

Money has been and is freely subscribed for the support of missions seeking to meet bodily and spiritual wants; music will as surely be given by those who have felt its power to meet that need of expression which so far keeps the people without the consciousness of God. Members of ethical societies, who have taught themselves to fix their eyes on moral results, may unite with members of churches who care also for religious things. Certain it is that people who are able to realize grand ideals will be likely in their own lives to do grand things, and doing them make the world better and themselves happier.

S. A. BARNETT.

TOYNBEE HALL, LONDON. _____

DISCUSSION.

CHARACTER AND CIRCUMSTANCE.

SOME time ago at a *Symposium* of the Aristotelian Society in which I took part the question was discussed, whether Character and Circumstance are Co-ordinate Factors in human life, or whether either is subordinate to the other? My thoughts have often recurred to the subject since, with a conviction that the question is less simple, or, at any rate, less easy to answer briefly than it perhaps looks at first. There can be little doubt that we all acknowledge in action, though not always in express reflection, on the one hand the effect of Circumstance on Character, and on the other sometimes the triumph of Character over Circumstance, sometimes the failure of Circumstance to correct, mould, or sustain Character.

For all who are interested in the education or guardianship of the young, in the question of improving the condition of certain classes of the community, or again in the improvement of other individuals, or even of themselves, must have felt the enormous importance of circumstances, the influence on the future of children of the circumstances of their home and school life; the often incalculable effect on the young of their surroundings, of their companions, teachers, employers, of the economic, material, and social conditions under which they live; the way in which certain

conditions of life and labor among the poor, seem to make many virtues and graces all but a sheer impossibility. Or consider the desperate anxiety which we sometimes feel about those whom we love when they are placed in new or difficult circumstances, especially when they are young, or, as we may think, "weak" and easily influenced; the fear we sometimes have about ourselves lest in given circumstances the nearness of some temptation, the continued recurrence of some irritation, should make us forget our better self or lose our self-control,—the way in which we feel that the presence of one man seems to raise us to a better level, while that of another puts us out of tune with all mankind and stirs up ill-feelings that we thought we had got the better of.

On the other hand, most of us have known cases where character, in its weakness or strength, seems to mock circumstances,—the most attractive virtue emerges from the most unpromising surroundings, and springs up like a lily among weeds; from the squalid, disorganized, demoralizing environment of the drunkard's home there comes forth a daughter who is a model of foresight and trustworthiness, a born organizer,—the very prop and pillar of the household to which she goes,—or a son pre-eminent in temperance, orderliness, gentleness, steadfast strength. These are, indeed, the exception, they are always a surprise, yet they are by no means unknown.

Or a home which seems adapted to be the very nursery of virtue produces hypocrites and wildlings. What is the explanation? "Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it." Is this true? *Will* the man continue in the way in which as a child he was forced to walk? Was Bacon right in averring that "men do after as they have been accustomed"? The answer here is probably, first, that life is not all a matter of habit; second, that habits that are acquired in one set of conditions may be more or less easily broken in another, or habits that were acquired with great difficulty and "against the grain" may be easily lost when the pressure that enforced them is removed.

We may observe on the one hand that it is common and seems reasonable to prefer to take a friend, a servant, a companion, a master, from a house that has a good record; but here, as far as any individual member is concerned, we only go upon this ground in as far as the individual member with whom we are concerned is personally untried or unknown; it would be a patent absurdity to prefer the proved "black sheep" from a good flock, or even an

untried unit of it, to a tried and proved member of a family otherwise disreputable. Personal individual proof is the best we can get,—the only proof that is really satisfactory; indeed, if we trace it back, the good name of any house or neighborhood, any class or nation, is a glory reflected in the first place from individuals,—a name, good or bad, must be “made,” and may be lost.

What makes the whole question of the relation between Circumstance and Character seem more difficult even than it is, is that owing to its complexity it is by most seen one-sidedly; and when we begin to discuss the matter we are confronted with epigrammatic expressions of partial and limited views, and our most frequent impulse is to take one or other of these limited views and try to find the whole truth in it. The region of proverbial wisdom in which so much of our thought about conduct still moves is a region abounding in brief and pointed expression of aspects of truth which are at once striking and narrow. They have the charm of vividness and picturesqueness, of being easy to grasp, to apply and to remember,—and they also have their use, as a record of past insight and a reminder of fragments of present truth. But while we are intent upon one bit of truth, it often grows before our eyes to disproportionate dimensions; and the result may be either distortion of our mental perspective or, when the scene changes and the other side of the shield is presented, doubt and disturbance,—the emergence into consciousness of contradictions which we do see.

I think this is what we find when we first begin to reflect on the relation between Character and Circumstance. On the one hand is a general recognition of the force of circumstances, in ordinary rules of life, in saws and maxims, in our own experience of particular cases; on the other hand (first) a conviction of the supremacy of character in striking instances of heroic triumph over pain and temptation, of love stronger than death, of fidelity that remains unshaken by fear or favor, of kindness that survives ingratitude and contumely, of nobility and dignity which chance and change cannot affect. Here, at least, we think, is proof that “man is man and master of his fate.”

But (second) we have here too that which seems worse than any subordination of character to circumstance,—namely, the prevailing badness and weakness of some characters in what seem the best sort of surroundings. Here, of course, it may be said that in such an instance it is only our ignorance of what really are the desirable

circumstances for such a character that makes us call them in this case "the best." But this is no consolation—it is only to drive us from perplexity to despair, since such knowledge as we have is all that we can build upon.

What we seem to see in these wretched cases is, that circumstances which mostly tend to good are here powerless against ill,—just as in the previous case we saw circumstances which generally drag men down to a lower level, trodden underfoot, and triumphed over, made "stepping stones to higher things."

It may be asked here, What meaning do we give to the terms which constitute the two members of the antithesis? What is meant by Character, what by Circumstance, and what is the distinction between the two? Is it intended that Character and Circumstance together should include all the factors of human life? If so, the distinction is hard to draw; at any rate, there is a debatable borderland between the two. What we commonly mean by Character is, I suppose, that part of a man's nature which is, or may be, manifested in action; that more or less permanent complex of habits, feelings, dispositions, etc., of which conduct, good or bad, is the most direct and important outcome. I wish here to take it in this sense,—the sense of *moral* character,—not in Mr. Shand's "psychological" sense as meaning a man's whole nature and life.

What we commonly mean by Circumstance is all those elements or factors of a man's environment which make part of his life or experience, and which may, perhaps, be roughly summed up under the heads of Material, Economic, Social or Political, Moral or Religious, Æsthetic and Intellectual. We do also, I think, commonly regard physical health as a "Circumstance" in relation to Character. It is not perhaps so easy to say whether Beauty, Strength, and other physical endowments are so, and more difficult still to pronounce in the case of Temperament, Intellectual and Emotional endowments, and acquired skill. This difficulty of drawing the line is no doubt an indication of some kind or degree of unity. How this is to be understood or conceived we shall inquire later on.

In given definite cases it may be as easy to distinguish between Character and Circumstance as it is to distinguish between the food now on my plate and my bodily organism. And if we say that Character is moulded by Circumstance, we may mean very definitely that what a man is as an ethical being depends on the

conditions of his human and material environment,—on food, climate, companions, laws, public opinion, current custom. Or in saying that Character triumphs over Circumstance we may mean quite decidedly that a man remains as honest when impoverished as he was when wealthy, is as just and kindly when wounded by ingratitude and misunderstanding as when cheered by admiration and general appreciation, is as pure in walk and conversation when forced to dwell in the tents of wickedness as when in the companionship of good and true men.

In discussing questions of the relation between Character and Circumstance we are thinking of both, for the most part, as we ordinarily find them in life, and not of the most extreme cases that are actual or possible: we are able to weigh one against the other, as it were, to some extent; to think of Character as stronger than Circumstance, *e.g.*, only because we take Character and Circumstance at a sort of average level—we do not take into account such natures as could hold their own against the unremitting pressure of truly desperate circumstances.

It is, of course, understood that circumstances are only *my* circumstances, when they affect my consciousness,—circumstances that do not touch me in thought or feeling are no part of *my* life at all,—and we never think that Character and Circumstance are without reciprocal influence; and when we say that Character triumphs over Circumstance, we mean that Character improves in spite of hindrance, or at least does not deteriorate, in circumstances where we might expect it to do so.

The question we are considering has practical importance, for most of us are in one way or other interested in the improvement of some other human beings and desirous of our own improvement, and we know or believe that modification is in many cases in our power, to some extent. How, then, is this modification to be effected? Is there any one anywhere who will go to the length of saying that circumstances are not a means, and a most important means? In as far as any one does believe in the unimportance of circumstances it must be because he means by *good* circumstances (which he holds powerless to improve character), circumstances which can only be called *good* from some outside and irrelevant point of view. To a person deficient in musical ear or taste or cultivation “good” music may be a circumstance indifferent or merely annoying; or great intellectual or social opportunities may for some sufficient reason have no attraction for a person to whom

they are open, no response from him—to him they are no stimulus, and so can be neither help nor hindrance.

We may, of course, direct our effort to the improvement of material and other circumstances without much thought beyond the greater ease and comfort of existence which such improvement tends to produce; but is it possible to help to produce improvement in Character except by means of alteration of Circumstance? How else are we to set about it? I may, indeed, tell a man that Character is the more important, and that if he will improve himself and his mode of conduct, an improvement of his circumstances will infallibly follow; he will act upon his circumstances in as far as they are *his*, and replace them by a fresh set. I hope to succeed in my representations, and may do so; but if I do, is this anything but a case of affecting Character by Circumstance? the “Circumstance” here being myself and my exhortations?

Environment may be to Character what light, air, moisture, etc., are to the living, growing plant. Circumstance may be the means or instrument of change or development in Character. It may be possible or even easy at given stages of a man's life to distinguish between Character and Circumstance,* though some element of life which at one time comes under one category may at another time come under the other—*e.g.*, a passing intellectual denseness or alertness that can only be regarded as a circumstance may come to be a permanent condition, an intellectual aspect of Character. Or some previously fixed disposition may be broken down, and the manifestations which formerly might be regarded as an outcome of Character come to wear rather the aspect of Circumstance.

No doubt in all action the two factors are equally indispensable; but assuming a certain tolerable and modifiable condition of circumstances, we regard Character as intrinsically the more interesting, valuable, and important factor, while in our efforts to improve the world we lay more stress upon Circumstances, because it is they alone which are directly in our power. The popular estimation of the two, in relation to each other, is perhaps comparable to the current treatment of causes in relation to their effects. We take a Cause with more exactingness and lay more stress upon its details, but the Effect is what interests us most, and is that for the sake of which we are so particular about the cause.

If we pass from the relation which we seem commonly to appre-

* Cf. Montague, “The Old Poor Law.”

hend and accept to ask, How is the real, or underlying, unity between Character and Circumstance to be conceived? we may be told (as by Dr. Bosanquet) that "the self is character when regarded as an organized whole; it is circumstance when regarded as a congeries of details."

No doubt Character and Circumstance both have their relation to the totality of a man's life or nature, and no doubt the points of view are different; but in the "unity" here suggested Character is taken in a very much wider sense than in the foregoing remarks, and the unification with which we are provided seems just the attempt at a summary solution of the ultimate problem of differentiation in unity in the case of the individual mind. But the unity which Character induces upon Circumstance by means of organization is often exceedingly scrappy and imperfect, and also the unity due to systematization does not seem to be always in itself good and desirable in the case of an individual character. That is, Unity in the sense of organization is often unattainable (or at least unattained), and Unity *quâ* Unity can hardly be affirmed to be good or desirable.

I need not say that I make no pretension to have even suggested a solution of the difficulty that underlies the antithesis under discussion, either as a general philosophical problem or in its narrow practical sense, but have only recapitulated some of the difficulties which belong to it and some of the opinions which have been held about them. One necessary preliminary to understanding current views, and clearing our own, would seem to be as careful an analysis as may be of the senses in which *Character* is often used, the elements which it is held to include. We may say, in the first place, that Character is *psychical*,—we do not regard anything that is *material* as a part or element of Character.

Again, it is *Me* (or part of *Me*) as distinguished from the rest of the world, with which I am in interaction, but which is not *Me*.

In this rest of the world which is not Character may be reckoned causes or concomitants of Character.

And it is more or less lasting and more or less unchanging as contrasted with what is more transient and changing,—*e.g.*, we distinguish Character from its manifestations in transient and ever-varied action.

No doubt, also, we think of a man's nature as being intrinsically such that given certain conditions it will develop in a certain way,—“unless each thing had a nature of its own there could be neither

Character nor Circumstance,—it is only definite special nature that can be affected in a given way by ‘Circumstances,’—that is, by the nature of other things and their position in reference to it.” Still, granting this initial nature and its continuity of development, we recognize that a character may, as we say, change,—that is, at a certain stage in its development or arrest of development its attributes and manifestations may differ from what they formerly were, in a way that is not explicable by reference to Circumstance alone. There is an analogy between *Character* as thus regarded and the nature of say an acorn which develops into an oak, or a robin’s egg which develops into a robin. We may note further that it is important when we are discussing “Character” to consider whether we refer to a point of time, or a limited period, or a whole life.

E. E. CONSTANCE JONES.

GIRTON COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

BOOK REVIEWS.

INSTINCT AND REASON: An Essay concerning the Relation of Instinct to Reason, with some Special Study of the Nature of Religion. By Henry Rutgers Marshall, M.A. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1898. Pp. vii., 569.

As one lays down this elaborate and systematic volume two remarks are suggested. It is remarkable, first, for its sustained originality and constructive power. It is, indeed, a mass of original suggestion, with the form of a treatise and the inspiration of a single argument. We have here new theories of the nature of—too many things to be easily detailed; certainly of such fundamental matters as the physical basis of consciousness, spontaneous variation, instinct, impulse, the social organism, the ego, reason, morality, and religion; a variety of purely incidental theories making their appearance by the way. When it is added that the originality is real and reasoned, the importance of the book will be perceived. Into the soundness of its conclusions one cannot go far in these few lines to examine.

The second remark is that this, after the recent work of M. Tarde, Professor Baldwin, Professor Royce, and others, is another striking sign of the tendency to bring a physiological psychology